



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
WATER RESOURCES COMMISSION  
100 CAMBRIDGE STREET, BOSTON MA 02114

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**Meeting Minutes for September 14, 2006**

*Minutes approved November 9, 2006*

**Members in Attendance:**

Kathleen Baskin	Designee, EOEa
Marilyn Contreas	Designee, DHCD
Mike Gildesgame	Designee, DCR
Mary Griffin	Designee, DEP
Gerard Kennedy	Designee, DAR
Mark Tisa	Designee, DFG
Joseph E. Pelczarski	Designee, CZM
Thomas Cambareri	Public Member
John LeBeaux	Public Member
David Rich	Public Member
Bob Zimmerman	Public Member

**Others in Attendance:**

Ariana Johnson	DCR
Alan Roscoe	CDM
Michael Cunningham	SEA Consultants
Jon Beekman	SEA Consultants
Linda Hutchins	DCR
Bruce Hansen	DCR
Peter Weiskel	USGS
Duane LeVangie	DEP
Erin Graham	DCR
Marilyn McCrory	DCR
Vandana Rao	EOEA
Martha Stevenson	LWVM & WSCAC
Eileen Simonson	WSCAC
Michele Drury	DCR
Pam Heidell	MWRA
Bennet Heart	EOEA
Margaret Callanan	EOEA
Frank Hartig	DCR
Jeff Mickelson	DEP
Kerry Mackin	Ipswich River Watershed Association
David Lutes	EOEA
Peter Tassi	Town of Reading
Peter Hechenbleikner	Town of Reading

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**Agenda Item #1: Executive Director's Report**

Baskin announced that a new Secretary of Environmental Affairs, Robert Golledge, has been appointed. She also introduced David Lutes, Undersecretary for Policy at EOEa.

Baskin provided an update on the Sustainable Water Resources Initiative. Former Secretary of Environmental Affairs, Steve Pritchard, had directed the Water Resources Commission to develop the framework for a long-range (50 years) sustainable water resources plan. Under Baskin's direction, WRC staff is developing a draft framework to circulate to the commission and others.

Baskin made the following announcements:

- The Governor's Smart Growth Conference will be held December 1 at the DCU Center in Worcester. The conference will include a session on water and growth, and Baskin invited suggestions for speakers.
- A draft desalination policy is being developed and is being circulated to agencies for review. Todd Callaghan of the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management will likely make a presentation to the commission in October. A public comment period is expected.
- Progress is being made on the effort to streamline permitting for dam removal.
- The legislature asked the Office of Commonwealth Development to establish a "Blue Ribbon" panel to evaluate the effectiveness of the Water Management Act Policy and guidance. The panel held its first meeting on September 8 and will continue to meet every other Friday. The panel will report directly to the legislature by December 31. However, Water Resources commissioners are invited to comment on the report at the end of the process.

Hansen provided an update on the hydrologic conditions:

- August precipitation was generally normal. The Cape Cod and Islands region received below-normal precipitation.
- August streamflows were in the normal range statewide.
- August groundwater levels were above normal and normal. Record high water levels for August were observed in five wells.
- Reservoir levels are above normal and normal.
- Fire danger has generally been low over most of the state. Cape Cod is presently in the moderate range.
- NOAA's Climate Prediction Center, as of mid-August, does not show any drought forecast through November 2006 in Massachusetts.

**Agenda Item #2: Vote on North Attleborough's Streamflow Monitoring Plan**

Hutchins provided background on the proposed plan. The commission had retroactively approved an interbasin transfer for North Attleborough, with conditions, one of which was that the town develop a monitoring plan for streamflow in Abbott Run. The town submitted its plan, installed equipment, and has begun collecting data. The town will report monitoring results yearly. WRC staff recommends approval of the plan.

Simonson asked if the town had interacted with the Pawtucket Water Supply Board. Hutchins replied that when the interbasin transfer public hearing was held, the Pawtucket Water Supply Board declined to attend, but offered to share their data.

<b>V</b>	A motion was made by Zimmerman with a second by LeBeaux to approve the Abbott Run streamflow monitoring plan for the North Attleborough Hillman well interbasin transfer.
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	The vote to approve was unanimous of those present.

**Agenda Item #3: Update: Hingham Fire Station Inflow Removal Project**

Drury introduced Alan Roscoe of CDM and a request by the town of Hingham to eliminate an on-site septic system at its fire station, which is being expanded, and transfer sewer flows to an MWRA-served sewer system, which would discharge outside the basin that supplies water to the fire station. This change would constitute an interbasin transfer of 840 gallons per day. Drury stated that the spirit of the Interbasin Transfer Act is to minimize or avoid transfers, but not to micromanage at this level in the absence of demonstrated environmental impact. The amount of interbasin transfer is minimal in this case; however, there are concerns about the cumulative impacts of small transfers. In addition, because the sewer district is a legal entity with legislated boundaries, WRC staff are treating Hingham's request as a new interbasin transfer. The town is in the process of preparing an Integrated Water Resources Management Plan to look at the entire town's sewer needs; however, because of public health and safety concerns, it wants to hook up the fire station to the sewer system before that plan is completed. In addition, the town determined that disposal through an on-site septic system was not feasible because of concerns about the type of waste that may be generated by the fire station.

After discussions with the town, WRC staff suggested that the town remove an equal amount of inflow from a sewer system in the same basin in order to demonstrate no net increase in interbasin transfer from this connection. Inflow removal would have to exceed the amount required by MWRA (4 to 1) and DEP as a condition for connecting the sewer. A project in Ashland and Framingham provides precedent for this approach. The town identified that DCR's Wompatuk State Park in Hingham could remove 109,000 gal/day of sewer inflow from its campground water spigot drains and instead infiltrate that amount of water into the ground. In this case, the Hingham Fire Station would be credited with 5,000 gal/day of inflow removal, resulting in no net increase in interbasin transfer from the hookup to the MWRA sewer system. Staff therefore has concluded that the Interbasin Transfer Act does not apply to this project.

Zimmerman agreed that the Fire Station's hookup to the sewer system makes sense with respect to water quality issues, but pointed to recent studies indicating that 10 to 1 is a better ratio for I/I removal. He also questioned whether I/I removal from part of a sewer system was effective, since I/I will show up somewhere else in the system unless it is removed from the entire sewer system. He stated that, in general, every effort should be made to "keep water local." Drury replied that the 10 to 1 removal goal may be true for infiltration, but inflow can be better quantified. In this case, she added, inflow removal is required from within the same basin.

Simonson requested a legal clarification of the difference between a determination of insignificance and a determination of inapplicability. Baskin replied that staff would discuss this request with legal counsel.

Baskin explained that the Hingham case was presented to the commission as an update, and that no vote was requested.

**Agenda Item #4: Update: Town of Reading's Water Supply**

As background, Baskin explained that the Water Resources Commission previously approved an interbasin transfer of up to 219 million gallons of water from the MWRA to supplement the town of Reading's water supply for the period May 1 through October 31. Representatives from the Town of Reading and MWRA were introduced. The town manager, Peter Hechenbleikner, then described the issues facing the town as it considers whether it should continue to use its local water supply. Those issues include water quality concerns, escalation in the costs of treatment, protection of river resources, and the town's ongoing water conservation program. Per capita water use, at 55 gpcd, is well below DEP-mandated standards. The cost estimate for a new water treatment plant escalated to \$25 million in May 2006, partially as a result of high steel and energy costs. Because of this cost escalation, building a new plant was not considered an economically viable option. The town has voted at town meeting to buy all of its water from MWRA.

Mickelson summarized the administrative consent order that DEP issued on August 1, 2006. Important facts considered in the ACO included the following: the highly stressed condition of the Ipswich River, the impact of Reading's withdrawals on the river and the basin, water quality issues in the water supply, and historical information related to the town's current Water Management Act registration and the previous approval under the Interbasin Transfer Act. DEP determined that the town has met the requirements of the consent order to date. Both MEPA and Interbasin Transfer Act review will be required for the Town's latest application to be fully served by the MWRA water system.

Lutes provided an update on the MEPA process. He presented copies of the decisions – issued September 14, 2006 – on both the Notice of Project Change and the request for a Phase I waiver to expand the town's WRC approval so that the town can buy 100% of its water from MRWA. The secretary's certificate on the notice of project change requires preparation of a supplemental final environmental impact report, which will also serve as the ITA application to the Water Resources Commission. The draft record of decision grants a phase I waiver for Reading's proposed immediate tie-in to the MWRA system, subject to conditions. The public comment period on the draft record of decision closes October 10, 2006. Lutes expects that the request to approve the interbasin transfer will come before the WRC in late Fall 2006. Baskin added that WRC comments had been filed on the Notice of Project Change.

Simonson mentioned that WSCAC had also commented on the NPC and asked the commission for its fullest consideration of downstream releases from the MWRA Quabbin and Wachusett reservoirs. She pointed out that Wilmington and other Ipswich River communities will also be coming before the commission with applications to join the MWRA water supply system. She pointed out the commission's obligation to ensure that the instream flows of the donor basin are adequate. The ITA process provides the only opportunity, other than MEPA, for a big-picture discussion to take place, and she urged the commission to facilitate this discussion. Simonson added that habitat and instream-flow issues are the purview of the WRC, and these were considered for Brockton.

Zimmerman suggested that MWRA is complying with the law, and although we should ask MWRA to address instream-flow issues, he felt this was a separate issue from the town's application.

Lutes pointed to the record of decision and acknowledged that the needs of the donor basin are part of the decision-making process for the Water Resources Commission. Heidell noted that the MWRA does conservative analyses when it assesses the impacts of withdrawals. Since Reading's previous interbasin transfer application, the MWRA system demand had declined by 20 million gallons per day as a result of conservation measures. In 2005, MWRA worked with the downstream fish hatcheries to adjust releases and ramping rates and is releasing more water down the Nashua River than required. She expressed her opinion that the proposed larger discussion be a separate discussion.

Mackin expressed the support of the Ipswich River Watershed Association for the direction taken by the town of Reading. Zimmerman urged the WRC to institute a formal process to examine questions related to safe yield and instream demands. Simonson added that the Nashua River and Connecticut River watershed associations would gladly participate in such an examination led by the WRC.

Meeting adjourned.